

DEC 16 2009

The Minstrel



Identity

Redeemer University College's
Magazine of Creativity

Fall 2009

On Identity

When we chose the theme of Identity for the Fall issue of The Minstrel, there were a few complaints from artists and writers. Some complained the theme was too broad (“It’s so abstract!”). Some thought the theme was too narrow (“What do we know about identity?”). Others were frustrated with the concept of a theme (“Don’t confine our creativity!”).

So why focus on identity if it causes so much fuss?

As Christians, the theme of identity is supremely important, because it defines how we view others, ourselves, and God. If God is not loving, there is no reason for us to be. If our enemies are not our neighbours, then why should we love them as we love ourselves? More critically, if our identities are wrapped up in ourselves, what room does that leave for God? As Thomas Merton once said, “The reason we never enter into the deepest reality of our relationship with God is that we so seldom acknowledge our utter nothingness before him.”

The danger in centering our identity on things other than God, is not only in losing out on a relationship with God, but actually losing a sense of who we are as individuals. Simon Tugwell writes:

We hide what we know or feel ourselves to be (which we assume to be unacceptable and unlovable) behind some kind of appearance which we hope will be more pleasing. We hide behind pretty faces which we put on for the benefit of our public. And in time we may even come to forget that we are hiding, and think that our assumed pretty face is what we really look like.

The Minstrel’s purpose for this issue is to seriously examine where we find our identity, and why. For this purpose, a number of student works emerged to honestly wrestle with this complex problem of identity. Chris Baird, for instance, explores our own sense of divided identity from the cosmic perspective of good and evil in “Darkness hates and shadows no no light”. Then there is Joel Faber’s poem, “Judge Me”, which playfully examines our inability to really *know* anyone, until we have been caught in “the fine texture of silk/ spun in cobwebby relationships.” We also have Brittany Knapper’s short story “The Story of the Boy In the Grass”, which slyly taunts our desire to categorize and give meaning to everything we see.

Poets and painters, writers and photographers, Redeemer’s community of talented and budding artists have banded together to share their visions of identity in a fallen world, and to offer some suggestions for healing.

We hope you enjoy what they have to offer.

Sincerely,



Peter Frieswick
Senior Editor



Jeff Exner
Assistant Editor

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Poetry..... | 1 |
| now you see me... - Jesse Burke | 1 |
| Phoenix Song - Ellen Van Giessen | 2 |
| Darkness hates and shadows no no light - Chris Baird | 2 |
| Judge me: - Joel Faber | 3 |
| Wherever I Might Find Her | |
| three-fourteen - Jesse Burke | 4 |
| Sonorous Folds - Steve Harris | 5 |
| Ringling and Ancient Bell | |
| Soul Wings - Jonathan Silverthorn | 6 |
| One Small Piece | |
| It Changes - Matthew Mulitze | 7 |
| # 0702198710 | |
| Astomatous (And Yet I Must Scream) - Jeff Exner | 8 |
| A Psalm | |
| Photos and Artwork..... | 9 |
| You Live in the Past - Tyler Vanholst | 9 |
| Untitled - Amanda van der Heiden | 10 |
| Catherine - Jesse Burke | 10 |
| Short Stories..... | 11 |
| The Dolls' House - Emily Germain | 11 |
| The Story of the Boy in the Grass - Brittany Knapper | 12 |
| The Greatest - Jeffrey A. Hiebert | 14 |
| Ordinary - Alan Hoover | 17 |
| The Fish - Peter Frieswick | 18 |

Staff

Senior Editor - Peter Frieswick

Assitant Editor - Jeff Exner

Faculty Advisor - Professor John Van Rys

Layout Support - Brittany Knapper

Cover Art - Tyler Vanholst

Selection Comittee

Joel Faber

Joel Sjaarda

Julianne Vyn

Adjudicators

Chris Cuthill

Hugh Cook

Professor John Van Rys

now you see me...

there's a coin in your pocket that dances alone
ascending the staircase to fair Babel's throne
among the thistles and briar they've grown
to keep out the God Overthrown

there's a coin in your hand with the man in the moon
hunting the Whale with a lecture harpoon
while the Wolf licks his teeth and his eyes like balloons
the sun has gone down too soon

heads or tails till you lose your voice
heads or tails, there is no third choice

there's a coin in the air with bloodthirsty grin
waiting for Boy No. 12 to begin
a third-rate investor sheds his second skin
allows his facade to wear thin

there's a coin on the floor that whispers a tale
of a neverending Sleeper, her dreams to impale
upon the grey matchsticks of yesterday's mail
her windows all turning to shale

heads or tails till you murder your brother
heads or tails, it's one or the other

heads or tails, the stairs to descend
heads or tails, you win again.

Jesse Burke (1st year, Theatre Major)



What happens when humans lose their pride? Are they destroyed, or do they become something new? What if you could let go of your dreams? What if there was more than survival? What if ambition is what kills us? What if you had the courage to be an absolute nobody?

Phoenix Song

Old and withered, I cry out in the pain of it all.
Knowing that no one is left to answer my call.
Consumed by sadness, despair and fear,
I search for what still holds me here.
I cannot seem to find a thing, the thing that holds me here.
So I sigh, and with a final cry, I burst into flame.
But instead of the cold grip of death, I feel the pull of life.
Reborn anew, no longer a captive of grief and strife.
I am still who I was before, but somehow not the same.
I am a wild, newborn thing, no longer shy and tame.
The pain still hides within my chest, an ache of the past.
But I no longer feel the need to let it hold me fast.
So in my finally desperate hours, where my soul gave in.
I grew and became something new, not captive of that sin.
I am a creature of flame, of feathers, bone and wing.
Yet all will hear my song when I decide to sing

Ellen Van Giessen (3rd year, Psychology Major)

"Phoenix Song" is about pain. Pain that knocks a person down, so low that they don't think they will survive it. But everyone has the ability to become a phoenix, and use the pain to create something or someone new. It arose from my work with sexual assault survivors, and the courage and transformation they have shown me. I hope that "Phoenix Song" stirs the phoenix within each one of you and spurs you to transform.



Chris Baird (5th year, English\Education Major)



As Christians we are always engaged in a cosmic struggle, whether we are aware of our participation or not, and our identity is formed by the side we choose to be on. This piece is an image of that struggle, and a portrayal of our world, which encompasses both the story of the light and the story of the darkness. In reality, the divide between the story of light and the story of darkness is much less apparent than the line which divides this work.

Darkness hates and shadows no no light

Darkness hates the sun
and throws
shadows, no arms of color,
no light to the sky.

And dark, as if to say,
night, fades when black today
turns bright.

"I die"
Night screams, and
as sun rises, all who seek light come,
ruled by that, and follow.

That dark despises me.

Judge me:

AE dustjacket Puma spine,
a scholarship flyleaf;
large, friendly letters
smiling up through the typeface.
Well-thumbed pages
dog-eared by friends,
a subtitle that hints at
rhythm and wit.

You see me every day --
but do you know me?

The truth about me
is the truth that I live,
the fine texture of silk
spun in cobwebby relationships;
the midnight talks and the
moment our guard drops:
when trust sears away
that last layer of skin.

Don't judge me
'til you've read me.

Wherever I Might Find Her

A human sheaf, friendship-girdle
of my arms a tight farewell
around the spark of you.
Sand of togethertime
funnels through this moment,
freefalls into apartness--
love lived longs for
returning,
already.

Joel Faber (4th year, English Honours Major)



"Wherever I Might Find Her" has at its core a very simple act of saying goodbye to a friend. Have you ever realized just how long that moment is? Everything that came before and everything that's going to come after is somehow focused into the meaning of that goodbye. To some extent, the nature of a friendship is summed up in the way you say goodbye.

"Judge me:" is a poem about the nature of identity which comes out of my Redeemer experience. So many people know so many other people that there's precious little anonymity on campus – which is one of things to love about Redeemer! It's easy, though, to judge people by what you can see of them sitting in the foyer or commuter's lounge, working in the library or cafeteria; not as in a self-righteous judgement, but not realizing how much of them you don't know.

three-fourteen

it is my first day
on the planet,
though i am
fully grown.
everything is
strange and wide-angle.
the finches spin nests
from my hair (stranded)
and my twining fingers.
how they grow!
like history!
melting in pockets!
chalk-light.

i fear i do not
understand the grasses
and their confessions
of thirst.
the morning dew
travels to the edges
of the atmosphere
and back
before my eyes.
(yet after my exclamations.)

the next-door is blue,
airy and free.
crisp like October morning.
gray like November mourning.
i perch on a nearby blooming stump
and absorb the rain:
electric-eel rain
that cracks my
prose-colored glasses.
i remove them,
and all blurs
accordingly.

a passing owl strikes
three-fourteen
and twelve lost coins.
my focus shifts from none
to all, and the colors
crash through me
vivid
and
white.

you dislodge yourself
from my eye,
quietly.

Jesse Burke (1st year, Theatre Major)



This is a poem of Spring, of rebirth and reawakening. This poem is best accompanied by the sound of rain just after reading from the philosophers, the smell of woodsmoke, and the feeling of being a small woodland creature. I hope that, by the end of the poem, the reader has rediscovered something about the strangeness of bodies and space.

Ringling and Ancient Bell

ringing and ancient bell,
call us all together
succour from calumny,
give voice your word
your siren balm

yield to me, horn of david
my Chinese brother
call me all tend
his sullen cell encrusted
in the terrors of his state

surrender to me, adamic flute
my Indian sister
from hindu nationalist (love him!) shielding
with tears a universe wide
her sacred and tremulous child

deign to offer me, song of mores
my Rwandan father
his sheep one and all
battered and splayed
their chorus hands remember

give me, give me, eloi-song
to know how long!
to wear the robe of the little longer
with blood and impatience and mourning
for the no longer under the throne

this day, today i seek i call
to the four angel trumpets:
speak, resound and let the earth
now give up her dead
give up her dead

Steve Harris (4th year, Theology Honours Major)



In Ringling and Ancient Bell I attempted to give voice to the sufferings of my sisters and brothers in places of our world where those confessing Christian faith have experienced tremendous persecution or violence. Their stories are, in a way more deeply than I can say, also my story.

Sonorous Folds is an autobiographical poem. It was written after a sunny afternoon spent reading in my backyard this summer. From nowhere, I had the sudden realization that folding flowers, Arab children and my body are all gifts—gifts given by the God whose I am.

Sonorous Folds

votive flowers—
this one blooming, that one now folding—
diminutives of the divine glory

children romping
(four and eight years now)
laughing in arabic

and i becoming,
fully and finally,
a body.

Soul Wings

I walk this grand earth as something I'm not;
gravity's vigour hath imprisoned me.
For I am an angel with only one wing.
The infinite skies are where I should be,
dancing liberally on the heavens,
but, restricted, I know I will not see.

Acceptingly I have remained with post,
wandering, grinding sand between my toes.
Today I decide, when my soul permits,
to rear my head and observe what I've missed.
I glance at the footprints I've dragged behind,
and only one thing dares cross to my mind.
There in the sand grains, adjacent my steps,
is a small set of prints, coming to rest
beneath the arches of a fair woman's feet:
She's scenic, attractive, angelic at least.

On instinct my hand reaches, she takes it in hers
and turns as I regard the lone part on her back.
My soul lurches, I somehow know she is mine,
that we will forever enjoy love without lack.
There's no corner of universe we cannot reach,
no portion of the cosmos we will not cover.
"We are each of us angels with only one wing.
And we can only fly embracing each other."

One Small Piece

I found a piece of you
deep inside of me
with no strings attached
I rip you out of me
take away the fallacy
of this falsely relaxed
member of long acts
gone as the full sea
performed in the past
this piece I must set free
return where it should be
and cover its tracks
for this piece of you lacks
the todayness in me
it used to fit so easily
but the torn up and scratched
can no longer be matched
with this body I see
plain in front of me
in the mirror

Jonathan Silverthorn (1st year, Religion & Theology Major)



"Soul Wings" is a short description of an angel and his struggle with placement. Handicapped, he is unable to fly and is left to traverse the ground around him. Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? Sometimes when we discover ourselves in that place we can find comfort in people who have shared experiences. This was the inspiration behind the poem.

"One Small Piece" attempts to characterize an internal struggle with identity. We all face different challenges in our lifetimes that can leave us with feelings of regret or anguish. We don't always react as we should, and sometimes we hold on to short-term forms of comfort for longer than we need to. The question to ask yourself when reading this poem is: What does the piece represent for me?

It changes

It changes
We see it as we drive
The shapes the earth has been forced to take
Solid then soft, rough than smooth
Paths leading into the unknown
Holes in the block of wood
A black line against the white
Lines going parallel to us
On the ground and in the air
It changes

0702198710

They are everywhere
Above and below
We can see them but,
We can't hear them
Thin and black stretching for miles
Their cold hands always stretching,
For more
Strong, tall, proud
Standing over our flags
Commanding the eyes to them from all directions
They are everywhere
Above and below
We can see them but,
We can't hear them

Matthew Mulitze (4th year, Theatre Major)



For me, poetry is a way to convey a message without having to talk to tons of people. It is personal. I write about whatever is heavy on my heart. In "# 0702198710," I look at the concrete jungles that we live in and how they shape the identity of humanity. In "It Changes," again, we change the shape of the earth for our own benefit.

Astomatous (And Yet I Must Scream)

Skin – sheet or shroud?
Let me out.
This body holding me
Let me out
This alien landscape
Let me out

My skin I plant my flag in
You I will make what I will.
shape the surface,
to be what I will be,
of the world.
Let me out.

This is ground control
to major change.
My skin, my heart,
who makes who?
Where is God through all these?
I want to be near you.
Let me out.

A Psalm

Lord, drive the me from me
Please be the me in me.
So there is no me left in me
Answer for me when I am called

Be the I Am in my response.
Be my wants that I may have none
Be my needs that I may need not.
Be me in my place.

Jeff Exner (4th year, Combined History/English Honours Major)



Paul said in Galatians "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," and "A Psalm" was a prayer to God in this order.

"Astomatous," which means having no mouth, was a poem of searching out the way in which people look for identity. Often our identity is found through our transformation of the external; of the landscape around us, other people, or our skin to look how we imagine. The poem itself is shaped by external sources, song lyrics and images or ideas that can mold our conception of ourselves.



Tyler Vanholst (3rd Year, Art Major)



"You Live in the Past"

12" x 12"

Oil on Canvass

This piece was created in reaction to my first realization of true family and true love. This I had not discovered until long after the piece was finished. I needed a pause in my life to understand and comprehend what is of highest importance. Although the physical painting process took nearly an hour or so, the emotional build up was a long time coming: about six or seven years.



Amanda van der Heiden
(4th Year, English Honours Major)



"Untitled"
8" x 10"

Digital Photography

Rushing water and wrought iron fences: I suppose these are somewhat paradoxical. Water

flows freely over the edges of life; fences hold us back and preserve us from danger.

Some of us move swiftly through life, others proceed with more caution. And yet, both offer an incredible amount of power. Whether we are the free-flowing water or the sturdy, firm support, our identity provides us with a sort of power: to do justice to the place we have been given.

Jesse Burke (1st year, Theatre Major)

Photography, to me, is a kind of journalism. I have little to do with the creation of the moment, but I am there to observe. The technical aspects are far less important than developing the will and desire to witness the small miracles of existence.

"Catherine"
39" x 59"

Digital Photography



The Dolls' House

Your house belongs to the dolls. They sit on couches and in shadowy corners, peering down from tops of shelves, and nestling themselves into the niches of bookcases. They line the staircase and queue up along the living room walls.

Over the years, you've named them all, but you only remember a few names now – Lucinda, Antoinette, Evangeline, Anastasia. The rest seem to shift from place to place. You can't remember all of them.

Everywhere you turn, dozens of glass and porcelain and button eyes linger on your movements. You dress in a closet now, to avoid the mournful stare of a little harlequin perched on the vanity in your bedroom. Your bathroom has been invaded by a troupe of porcelain ladies in discolored garden dresses. As you brush your teeth in the evening, the mirror reflects your stooped body, with its faded skin and bright, anxious eyes. Behind you, the dolls' eyes shine out of the shadows.

You say you hate people. You've lived here all of your life to stay away from them, letting the bushes against your windows grow tall and thick, allowing the trees and the creeping grasses to shield your house from the road.

You hate people, but the dolls are sometimes worse. They never speak, smiling their secrets into the darkness. Dust coats their eyeballs and their fingers extend brokenly into empty space. Your sister sent them, one for each birthday and Christmas, instead of visiting. You never would have bought them yourself.

When I visit your house, I think you must be crazy, with your long, ragged grey hair and mothball scented clothing, with your rants against the world. Your neighbours leave you alone. You say you hate them, but they might have hated you first. Maybe it would have been different if you had tried harder to be likeable.

Now your house belongs to the dolls. As you return home from the grocery store, clutching a plastic bag full of instant soup mixes, apples and teabags, you find your front door locked against you. You beat against it, but no one comes. You circle the house, rapping on windows, but the dolls simply stare out at you smiling. Evangeline's eyes meet yours, and she does nothing, her lips curled up in a sneer. You return to the broken porch, sit down on the steps and cry.

It is nightfall before you realize you had a key in your pocket the entire time.

Emily Germain (3rd Year, English Honours Major)



I was inspired to write "The Dolls' House" by a family friend who had a house full of dolls. The story reflects the tension that can exist between the identity of an individual and that of the community around her. Also, I am intrigued by what we don't know about the identities of our friends and neighbours.

The Story of the Boy in the Grass

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, in a place not so very far from here, a little boy sat in the grass. Little boys sitting in the grass are not unusual in any time or place. In fact, little boys covered in mud, throwing rocks, or climbing trees are not unusual either. What was unusual was that this little boy did not do anything but sit in the grass.

The little boy did not have a name, so far as anyone knew, nor did he belong to anyone, so far as anyone knew. The little boy spent his days sitting in the long grass on the step of the mountain just outside the town. The town was filled with small brick houses and black shingled roofs. It had a gas station, a general store, a bank, and a town hall. The mountain had wildflowers and rocks and grass. The grass grew high enough that when the little boy sat cross legged, it would nearly reach his chin. When the little boy ducked his head down, the grass would tickle his cheeks and the little boy would giggle.

Curiously, the little boy would sit in the grass and tell stories.

One day, a stranger stumbled down the mountain into the long grass where the little boy sat. The stranger was ragged and dirty and smelled of old sweat. The stranger's hair fell in every which way upon his head. His eyes were brown and tired, his lips reddened, cracked and parched. His feet were bare, blistered and battered, his hands were covered in dirt. The little boy sat cross legged in the grass at the step of the mountain outside the town.

In this time not so very long ago and this place not so very far away, strangers were the type of people that were not welcome in the town at the step of the mountain. Those who lived in the town at the step of the mountain found strangers to be an interruption to the way of life they led. Each simple person led a simple life. Each had their little brick house with the black shingled roof. Each simple person knew the next simple person. This was the way the town had always been. Each simple person knew that the boy in the grass at the step of the mountain outside the town was unusual. Each simple person dared not go outside the town to the step of the mountain. Each simple parent encouraged their boys to climb trees and throw rocks and cover themselves in mud, but not to sit in the grass and tell stories.

The stranger soon found that the town on the step of the mountain, the very mountain he had stumbled down, would not welcome him in. The stranger had been wary of the little boy who sat in the grass and told stories. For even strangers found this little boy unusual. Little boys should climb trees and throw rocks and cover themselves in mud.

One day, the stranger sat beside the little boy in the grass.

"Little boy," he said, "little boy, tell me a story."

The little boy sat cross legged in the grass. The little boy sat cross legged in the grass in silence.

"Little boy," the stranger said again. "Little boy, please tell me a story."

The little boy ducked his head down in the grass, and the blades tickled his cheeks. The little boy giggled.

"Little boy, please."

The little boy giggled as the blades of grass tickled his cheeks. The little boy giggled with such conviction that his voice could be heard throughout the entire town. The stranger watched as the little boy laid in the grass, smiling a smile as wide as he could manage. His eyes looked out toward the blue sky that blanketed the small town and the step of the mountain, and all other small towns and mountains. The stranger smiled too.

"Please, little boy, tell me a story."

The little boy mumbled a few words. The stranger, dirty, ragged and smelling of sweat looked at the small town which sat behind them. The stranger stood up and took a step away from the town. He sat down again. The little boy did not move. The stranger let his head fall back as he gazed into the sky. He wanted to see what the little boy saw.

"They put me here," the little boy finally said. "They put me here and they told me to sit. They told me to tell stories. Then they walked away."

The stranger watched as the clouds floated along.

"The wind listens." The little boy said. "The grass listens. The wildflower listens."

And the boy giggled.

In the town, the boy's giggles echoed between the small brick houses with black shingled roofs. The giggles penetrated the walls of the general store, the bank, the gas station and the town hall. The giggles found their way into the souls of the people in the little town on the step of the mountain. The giggles rode on the waves of the wind and the heads of the clouds and filled the blue sky. The stranger watched as the unusual joy of the unusual boy apprehended the mountain, the step of the mountain, and the little town on the step of the mountain.

The simple people in the little town were drawn to the boy's giggles. They didn't know why, or how, but they had been overcome. The simple people in the little town were drawn to the step of the mountain and the grass where the little boy stood. Some came out of curiosity. Some came out of fear. Some came, intoxicated by the laughter of the little boy.

The stranger watched as the people came. He watched as they filed in, silently. He watched as they sat down in the grass outside the town on the step of the mountain. He watched as they crossed their legs, as they ducked into the grass and let the blades tickle their cheeks. Then, he watched them giggle. One by one, each simple person laid back into the grass and let their voice ride on the waves of the wind.

"Little boy," the stranger said. "Little boy, will you tell me a story?"

And the little boy spoke.

"Once upon a time, a tree stood in the middle of the forest. It had the biggest, most beautiful leaves. It stood tall, and sturdy and wonderful. One afternoon, the tree lost all of its beautiful leaves. In another time, there was a chair that had three legs. Three legs is not enough for a chair, but it had been made by an old carpenter and old wood and so the chair didn't complain, unhappy as it felt. In yet another time, there was a fire that blazed and crackled. Vibrant colours made popping noises and everything within the fire was consumed. And once upon a time, there were ashes."

Then the little boy sat cross legged in the grass, still, solemn, somber.

The small town on the step of the mountain fell silent. The simple people watched as the clouds floated away with the laughter. They watched as the little boy stood up. They watched him climb up the mountain to the highest point, where a tree stood tall and brave and wonderful. They watched as the little boy tore his clothing on the tree branches. They watched him clamber up the tree. They watched him cut his arm, and scrape his knee. When the boy reached the highest point on the tree, he stopped. He sat down on the branch and then he giggled.

The stranger stood up. He walked past the simple people. He walked past the small brick houses with black shingled roofs. He walked past the gas station, the town hall, the bank and the general store. As he walked through the town on the step of the mountain his face became clean, his eyes became wide, his feet and hands became healed.

The stranger followed the words of the little boy's story. He followed them until they led him to the valley. There, in the valley beneath the small town on the step of the mountain, the stranger sat down in the grass. He picked up a small rock and threw it. He dug his fingers into the ground and felt the earth on his skin. And there, in the valley beneath the small town on the step of the mountain, the stranger laid his head in the blades of grass and laughed. The laughter scattered as ashes across the valley, and everywhere they fell a wildflower grew between the grass. And the little boy who once sat in the grass outside the small town at the step of the mountain vanished as the leaves fell from the tall, sturdy, wonderful tree.

Brittany Knapper (2nd Year, English Honours Major)



I wrote this prose while struggling with the thought of a decipherable identity in a story. We live in a world where everything must have a meaning. However, meanings are not always agreed upon. This story does not have identity, but like everyone else, you can still find meaning in it. Put yourself in the story. Who are you? The Townspeople curious of the joy? The Little Boy telling the Story? Or do you find yourself empathizing with the Stranger, touched by curious giggles and eager to spread them? The metaphor is yours. Enjoy it.

The Greatest

801. 162. G. 724. Black. Grey. Reflection. Rain. Chilling. Here, miss. Turning point. Hidden steel. Sleeping peacefully. Early dusk. The END. The death of Michael Evans.

Eyelids snapped open. Limbs jerked of their own accord. Michael Evans was disturbed. Hearing his own heavy breathing Michael felt the surreal feeling he always felt when ripped from a dream to reality. The feeling that this was real, the dream was figment did not entirely dissipate immediately. For Michael Evans had experienced no ordinary dream. The same string of images had flashed through his mind for the past month every time he fell asleep.

It disturbed him. The seemingly random phrases, numbers and pictures had become engrained in his consciousness.

His eyes adjusted to the dim apartment and that was when his ears were finally able to hear a siren. Blaring directly into his left ear was an incessant beep. It was Michael's alarm. Reaching over he switched the alarm status to OFF, cutting off the piercing sound.

Silence descended upon the sparse apartment like a living presence.

Michael glanced at the alarm clock. In red light it told Michael the time was 8:01. Michael's conference began at 9:30.

He swung his legs over the side of the bed and stood, stretching his limbs. He cranked his neck in both directions and hearing a satisfying crack he began to get ready.

A slit in the gray-green door widened to reveal a short, heavysset man with glasses and spotty hair. The man waited a moment then walked out, leaving the elevator car empty for Michael. After entering the confined space, Michael performed an about face so that he could read the array of buttons. Selecting 'G' he fidgeted and cracked his neck for the second time. The doors slid into place, sealing Michael inside. The car began to descend, the tinny music doing little to dismiss the slight uneasiness he felt when riding elevators. At the ground floor the doors parted again, allowing a respectable businessman in a black suit and grey tie to exit.

Michael Evans strode across the marble foyer to the payphone and inserted a quarter, lifting the receiver to his ear. He dialed a number he phoned quite frequently and so his fingers moved with rapidity over the silver buttons. After one hum, a woman on the other end picked up. And Michael Evans requested a taxi.

Rain. Sheets of falling water pounded the grey sidewalks and streets, flowing into miniscule rivers which were quickly diverted downwards into the multiple grates that bordered the road. Even so, the motorized shells of urban man rolled by the upper-class apartment complex; rolled by the cheery old-fashioned streetlamps posted on either side of the door. There was, however one vehicle that did stop at the building and not because of the streetlamps. It was Taxi # 162. It was the taxi that had arrived at Michael Evans' call.

Leaving the illuminated interior of the entrance, Michael entered the veritable deluge outside. He shivered as the chilling droplets pierced his dark jacket. Sprinting, but avoiding a fall, he reached the taxi and whipped the door open. Menacing torrents of water gave way to the dark, soft interior of the taxi cab. Michael closed the door pinpointing the rain to a drumming on the roof.

"Where 'ya headed, Mr. Evans," slurred the cab driver swivelled around from the driver's seat, pronouncing Michael's name as eevans.

"438 Park Avenue. The Ceretech offices. It'll be the big white building with a large sign out-"

"I know the buildin'," said the driver cutting off Michael's description.

Michael handed the driver the appropriate bills. After depositing the fee in his pocket, the driver shifted into drive and rolled the cab forward. Michael leaned back in his seat. Judging by the weather and the traffic it would be a fairly long ride across the city.

"D'y'a mind the radio?" asked the driver, glancing into his mirror to gain momentary eye contact with Michael.

"No."

Just as he replied, the driver switched the dial on. The station number 724, flashed into life in green numerals on the display. To Michael's surprise it was some kind of philosophical ramblings. Michael would not have assumed this would be the driver's choice based on his abuse of the English language.

Mr. Evans stared past the rivulets of water tracing the glass of his window and watched as civilization passed his view. Pedestrians, loaded with bags raced from shops to waiting cars, some sporting umbrellas, others braving the rain as Michael had. Streetlights, seeking to pierce the early dusk caused by storm clouds stood as sentinels to the traffic that cruised by. A man lay on a discarded piece of cardboard with another serving as a soggy roof. His face was indistinguishable through the rain but to Michael's eyes he was sleeping peacefully.

Michael glanced out the right window and saw something that made his heart skip a beat. A woman was struggling against a tall man for her purse. This was it.

"Stop," said Michael evenly but forcefully. The driver slowed.

"What ar-"

"Stop!" repeated Michael much louder, reaching forward to grip the driver's shoulder. The taxi stopped.

This was it. This was the turning point. This was the choice that made his dream real. He could choose to stop that man from killing the woman, for Michael somehow knew the man would try. He did not know the reason. He only knew it would happen. He could also choose to stay in the cab and continue on to his office for the conference. The latter choice would leave him the same as before.

The former would lead to his death.

"Here," said Michael, handing the cab driver a stack of bills. "I'm getting out here."

The driver nodded and gestured at the door. Michael reached over and opened it.

The philosopher on the radio spoke: "Who are the greatest among us? Are they-" The rain cut off the sound of the radio as Michael left the cab behind.

He strode into the street; towards his death.

As Michael stepped through the ankle-deep puddles he watched the struggle for the ornate purse continue. Then he was running, splashing waves of rainwater onto his neat, black pants and sending ripples spreading outwards away from his footfalls. He angled his right shoulder into the man's arm, loosening his grip on the purse, allowing Michael to grasp it. Quickly regaining his balance on the slick sidewalk, Michael turned to the woman and handed her the purse.

"Here, miss."

She took it, her eyes shining with gratefulness.

Time slowed and Michael could hear his heartbeat echo in the corners of his mind.

Thump.

The hidden steel of a semi-automatic pistol appeared in the man's hand.

Thump.

Michael turned and shoved the woman away from himself, sending her sliding on the drenched cement.

Thump.

He turned to see the man's slightly confused expression as his pistol aimed directly at Michael's chest.

Thump.

The man's finger tightened on the trigger and somehow Michael knew that the woman behind him was getting away.

Thump.

Michael felt rain trickle down his entire body.

Thump.

The man fired, sending a bullet into Michael's chest, puncturing skin and flesh. The impact of the lead sent him half-spinning and he fell to the wet pavement.

Thump.

Michael's crimson blood mingled with the rainwater as he lay staring upwards at the darkened sky that sent rain pummeling into the earth.

The End.

The death of Michael Evans.

"Who are the greatest among us? Are they the Olympians; displayers of such speed, strength and skill? Are they artists, painting a beautiful tragedy on a canvas sheet? Are they writers, using words instead of color to depict meaning to this world? I say none of these people are the greatest. I say the greatest ones are those who die for another. I say the greatest is a man who realizes his hopes, dreams and ambitions, and gives those up for another person so that that person may live their hopes, dreams and ambitions. I say it is the man who fully realizes the silence of death and still chooses to die so that another will live. These are the greatest representatives of our race. These are the ones that we should talk about with praise. No greater love is there than this."

-Philosophical Broadcast Station 724

Jeffrey A. Hiebert (1st Year, French Major)



"The Greatest" is a story about a man faced with the choice of saving his own life, or another's. By giving up his own life, he displays the greatest form of love. It is a tragedy and a triumph, for though life is lost, life is saved.

ORDINARY

He bumped his arm on the phone as he pushed up his black-frame glasses and walked out the door. It was a bright day outside. He could tell. The sun felt warm on his face, and he felt the strength it gave him. He adjusted his tie. The blue collar of his undershirt did not match well with his business attire. Oh well, what difference did it make? On second thought, he did up another button. Much better. He definitely fit the bill of mild mannered.

He walked, keeping up a brisk pace. He did not want to be late, again. His mind was not on his work however, but on much bigger things. Important things.

His mind wandered as he gazed into the sky. A plane passed overhead almost silently, but at the same time mind-numbingly loud. A small problem he learned to deal with when he was younger. The headaches had stopped in his teens. A few birds perched on the ledges of tall buildings. They seemed to blend in with the stucco walls. Pigeons probably.

A deep sickness suddenly swept through his whole body. He felt nauseated. Beside the jewellery store again. *Of course.* His steps quickened. He was unintentionally avoiding the cracks on the ground, moving quickly enough to clear entire cement blocks in a single bound. The pain stopped. He really had to pick a new route to work. No, this route was perfect. Sickening, but discrete.

Wait, what was that noise? His ears fixed on a sound. Soon everything else became inaudible. A scream. A cry for help. "Work will have to wait!" He dashed backed, retracing his steps, faster than a speeding bullet. He passed the gem seller's store, and felt like vomiting. That was one thing that he could never tolerate. Past the pigeons, past the location where he saw an airplane.

He made it without causing any reason for suspicion. He pushed the door open and stepped back into the phone booth. First the glasses, then the tie, then the jacket all came off in quick succession. His pants and shoes followed. He tucked his clothes neatly into the top panel of the booth. He retrieved his cape next, and attached it around his neck. He was ready for his "real" job. This was his "real" identity. Mild mannered no more he thrust the door open and took flight.

Alan Hoover (2nd Year, Phys Ed Major)



I wrote "Ordinary," in an ordinary way about an attempt at an ordinary day in the life of someone who is certainly not ordinary. The very first line of the story is a huge indication of who it is, and obviously the more and more you read the more and more clear it becomes. I think that our identities come out a lot like the way they do in the story. We have first impressions of who someone is when we meet them, and once we get to know them better, we learn more about them. I purposely never used the protagonist's name, because like in real life, no matter how much we think we know someone, totally knowing them is not possible. Only God can truly know us inside and out.

The Fish

I woke up on Friday morning and found a fish reclining on my kitchen table.

"Hello Mr. Fish," I said.

The fish said nothing back.

Thinking I had misjudged its sex I said, "Hello Mrs. Fish."

Maybe I had wounded its pride, because it said nothing back. Perhaps it was sulking because it had lost its gender so it could have sex without consequences, and now it was regretting that decision. I don't know—fish might not have the same moral code as humans.

So I readjusted my greeting but (he/she/it) still said nothing back.

Maybe (he/she/it) is shy around strangers, I thought. So I said, "Hello, my name is Dede. What is your name?"

The fish didn't notice me. Didn't move. Perhaps this fish doesn't speak English, I thought. Perhaps this fish comes from the Mediterranean Sea.

"Is your name *Icarthus*?" I asked.

The fish just lay there, but I could tell (he/she/it) sagged a little.

"Listen up," I said. "You listen up. I will tell you a story."

The fish didn't say anything. (He/She/It) was too proud to admit that I had figured out (his/her/its) name.

"Listen to this story," I said. "The Greeks have a legend about a boy with wings named *Icarthus*, who fell into the sea. He would have died, but a large fish swallowed him up. Days later it beached itself. *Icarthus* pushed his way out the fish's throat. He was almost dead. He had nothing to eat in the fish's belly. He stabbed the fish in the spleen to kill it, then he ate some its flesh and drank some its blood to regain his strength. In honour of that one fish, all fish in Greece were given the name *Icarthus*."

I looked at the fish to see if my story moved (him/her/it). It didn't.

"So you better behave, fish," I said. "You better speak up or I'll kill you like *Icarthus* did."

Thinking I would shake an answer out of my silent guest, I reached for the fish. (He/She/It) was cold to the touch, matching (his/her/its) frozen personality.

"You certainly aren't a people person," I said.

The fish still said nothing.

Dang, I thought. This is a fish. Of course it isn't a people person.

Maybe the fish didn't want to talk because it was wrapped in a clear plastic bag. Poor fish, maybe it's claustrophobic in there.

Too bad fish can't read, I thought. Otherwise this one could read the little pamphlet on the table called, "Overcoming Anxiety" by Charles Swindoll.

I wished this fish would say something, because I wanted to know what it was doing on my table. I'm a pretty generous host, but I draw the line at cold, limp fish. This fish should explain (his/her/it)self, or (he/she/it) should go.

Then I saw the fish had a price tag on it. \$5.22 it said. No wonder this fish doesn't want to talk. (He/She/It) is grumpy because some store worker undersold it.

My mother walked into the kitchen and saw me staring at the fish. "Don't mess with the meat," she said.

"This fish won't talk to me," I said.

"That's because its head is chopped off," she said.

Oh, I should have noticed.

"What are you going to do with it?" I asked.

My mother pulled the earthenware crock-pot out of cupboard. "I'm slow-roasting it for the church fundraising banquet."

Of course, there is her *Recipes for Better Living* cookbook on the table. I should have seen this right away.

"Are they going to eat it?" I asked her. "I mean, what if you don't get all the bones out? Those old people don't like hard things in their food. They only eat mush."

"They'll eat it," she said. "They'll devour anything without a head on it, if they think they can get away with it."

"Where did the head go anyway?" I asked as I opened the doors underneath the sink. "Is it in the trash?"

"Hell—how should I know? It comes pre-packaged this way. The pastor gave it to me to cook up for the dinner. What do you want a head for? You want little jelly filled eyes staring at you while you go about your business? You want your food watching you while you eat it? Stop asking questions and get your hands busy. You want to know the mysteries of the universe—you pray and ask God later. Right now, you better get a knife and slit this sucker open so I can baste it."

Peter Frieswick (4th Year, English Honours Major)



"The Fish" blends Greek mythology and Christocentric narrative together with a slight satiric twist. The story is told from the perspective of Dede, a young girl, who wrestles with deep, spiritual questions while interacting with her mom and a dead fish.

As Thornton Wilder used to say, "Pay Attention." Names, locations, and details are important. The key to unlocking the meaning of the story is to ask along side Dede, what is the identity of this fish?

The Minstrel is proudly sponsored by:

REDEEMER
University College
STUDENT
SENATE

Redeemer Campus
BOOKSTORE
Redeemer University College

Special Thanks To:

Student Activities Council

Katelyn Borgdorff
Desiree Hunse
April Larochele
Triona Mills
Craig Neely
Jess Ramsay
Joel Span

Marketing & Communications

Tim Wolfert
P.J. Vanderkooij

Advancement

Annetta Skelly

